



# Beringia Days 2006

## International Conference



Photo credit: Mikhail Zelenskiy

*The 2006 Beringia Days International Conference will be held at the Anchorage Museum of History and Art in Anchorage, September 7 and 8, 2006.*

*The conference, co-sponsored by the Museum and the National Park Service, celebrates the close ties between Russia and the United States in the Bering Strait area. Scientists, government officials, Native leaders and others from both countries will gather for presentations and opportunities for dialog about natural and cultural heritage of the Beringia region.*

This year about twenty Russian specialists, government officials, and Native leaders from the Russian Far East, the Chukotka Peninsula, the region across the Bering Strait from Alaska's Seward Peninsula, Moscow, and other areas in Russia will travel to Anchorage to attend the conference. They will be joined by people from different regions of Alaska and other locations in the United States. The conference is free and open to the public. The conference program and other information will be available at our website <http://www.nps.gov/akso/beringia> in the middle of July. You can also call the National Park Service at 907-644-3503; 907-644-3602; or 907-644-3601 for more information.

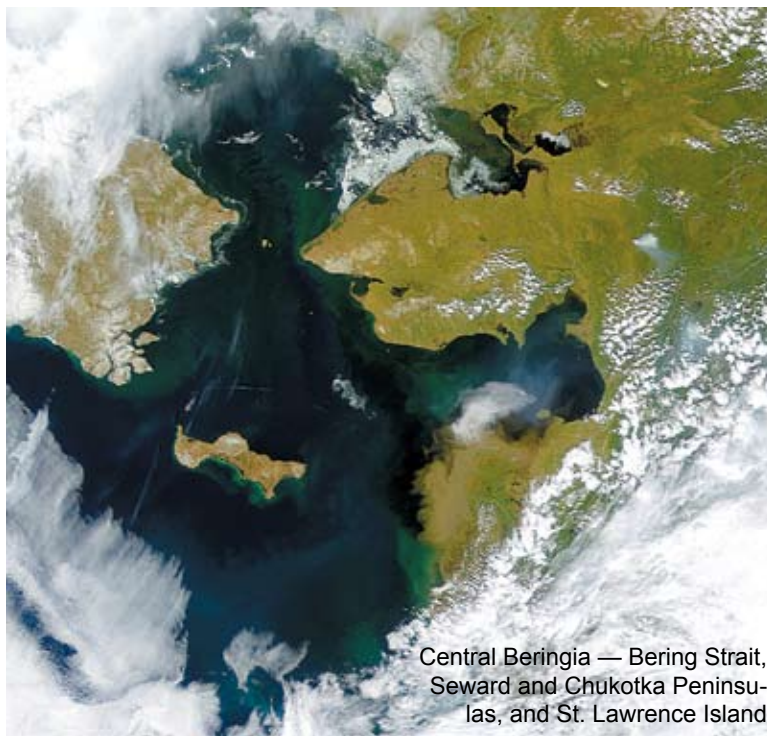
### **The Concept of Beringia**

During the last Ice age, 12 - 15 thousand years ago, Asia and North America were connected

by a wide flat isthmus that we now call Bering Land Bridge. The people that moved across this land became the first North Americans, following the earlier movements of land mammals and plants. The migrations between the two continents continued even after the bridge was submerged by the water of melting glaciers. The lands that were once joined retained a common character and the people of Beringia are united by language, tradition, and environment. The term "Beringia" comes from the name of Vitus Bering, a Dane who in the 18th century together with Aleksey Chirikov headed two famous Kamchatka expeditions. At the end of the 1930s a Swedish botanist Eric Hulten was the first to start using the term "Beringia" as a geographical description. Today, we use this

Photo credit: Vic Knox





Central Beringia — Bering Strait, Seward and Chukotka Peninsulas, and St. Lawrence Island

Photo credit: NASA

term to describe a vast area between the Lena River in the Sakha Republic in Siberia to the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories of Canada.

### The NPS Shared Beringian Heritage Program

During the Cold War, contact across the Bering Strait was tightly restricted between Alaska and Chukotka. In 1990, the concept of an international park spanning the Bering Strait was endorsed by Presidents George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev. Since then, the National Park Service has managed the Shared Beringian Heritage Program (SBHP) which supports a wide range of cultural exchanges, research and international meetings focused on the Beringia region.

The SBHP recognizes and celebrates the contemporary and historic exchange of ecological and cultural heritage shared by Russia and the United States in the Bering Strait.

The SBHP facilitates creating and maintaining a bridge of understanding and cooperation between our two countries in the broader Bering Straits area.

During the past 14 years the National Park Service, through the Shared Beringia Heritage International Park program, has been working closely with communities in Chukotka. The NPS currently has several research projects being conducted in Chukotka in conjunction with Alaskan partners such as Native organizations and universities. The National Park Service funds about 10 to 15 projects each year that support research and community projects throughout the central Beringian region. These projects, whether academic or community based, have a "Russian component" to them. Some of the studies involve doing some or all of the research in Russia, while others are solely in Alaska, of course with a Russian component. The program has been successful at enhancing local Alaska Native support through the encouragement of village based projects, many involving the youth. Every project is required to produce demonstrable products, such as for example, research reports and data bases, scientific and popular articles and books, presentations, exhibits, art programs, photographic images, audio or video tapes, and web sites. The results of these projects are described at the Beringia Days International Conference.

### Beringia Days Conference history

In 1996, Beringia Days International Conference began with a small group of government officials and scientists to share information about projects they were working on in the Beringia Region. They also used this as an opportunity to jointly develop projects for the next year. After a couple of years, the conference expanded and was then opened to include public participation. The conference was held in Anchorage until 2003, when it was hosted by the regional government of Chukotka, in Anadyr, the capital of the Chukotka Autonomous Region. The 2005 conference was again held in Anadyr and demonstrated the continuation of two countries' joint efforts to work together and protect the unique and shared values of Central Beringia.



Chukotka — pulling whale boat a shore

Photo credit: Mikhail Zelenskiy



Alaska — Kobuk Sand Dunes

Photo credit: Dan Mann



Photo credit: Vic Knox

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